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Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?

Peter A. Coclanis

DURING the past decade or two, Atlantic history has insinuated itself into the very depths of the historical discipline. In so doing the approach has transformed early American history—for better or worse or, more accurately, for better and worse. What is it about Atlantic history that has made it so appealing? For one thing the relative capaciousness of the approach represents a significant improvement, *ceteris paribus*, over narrower national or protonational alternatives. Second the approach has proved attractive and enticing to some absolutely first-rate historians, which has had what economists would call a powerful signaling effect on others in the profession. And cultural capital helps too. Through a variety of powerful institutional mechanisms—Johns Hopkins University's program in Atlantic History, Culture, and Society and Harvard University's International Seminar in the History of the Atlantic World, 1500–1825, to name two of the most obvious and important—scores of bright young scholars over the years have been exposed to, dazzled by, and initiated into Atlantic history.[1]

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[1] See, for example, Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999); Felipe Fernández-Armesto, "The Origins of the European Atlantic," *Itinerario* 24, no. 1 (2000): 111–28; Thomas Benjamin, Timothy Hall, and David Rutherford, eds., *The Atlantic World in the Age of Empire* (Boston, 2001); David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, Eng., 2002); Peter A. Coclanis, "*Drang Nach Osten*: Bernard Bailyn, the World-Island, and the Idea of Atlantic History," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 169–82; Games, "Introduction, Definitions, and Historiography: What Is Atlantic History?" *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History* 18, no. 3 (April 2004): 3–7; Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); Coclanis, introduction to *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel* (Columbia, S.C., 2005), xi–xix; Wim Klooster and Alfred Padula, eds., *The Atlantic World: Essays on Slavery, Migration, and Imagination*

What are these people talking about when they invoke Atlantic history and wax on about the Atlantic world(s)? Though there are many Atlantics, as it were, most scholars would probably agree with Bernard Bailyn's simple and direct proposition that during the "early modern" period (circa 1500–1800 CE) Western Europe, West Africa, and the Americas were sufficiently integrated in many ways to lend themselves to treatment as a single unit: the Atlantic world.[2] To be sure such scholars might quibble over what material and/or ideational concerns to include in such treatment, over just how unitary said treatment needs to be, over the power dynamics within and historical consequences of the unit in question, and over the degree to which this unit was hermetic or subject to breach. But by and large historians of the Atlantic community could live with this conceptual scheme. In truth, under its broad shelter, they have lived very well indeed.

So what is my problem with Atlantic history? Why the "for better and worse" earlier? Simply put, the levels of explanatory power and analytic acuity possible via the Atlantic history stratagem are beguiling but ultimately confining because the stratagem artificially limits the field of vision of its devotees, often blinding them to processes, developments, and conditions of central importance to understanding their figurative little corner of the world. Or to put it another way, Bobby Darin's way, we need to move "beyond the sea." Certainly that sea, but maybe others as well.

Seas and oceans are very much in these days. We have Atlantic historians and historians of the Indian Ocean world. We have long known about Braudel, but there are new generations of scholars touting *la méditéran-*

(Upper Saddle River, N.J., 2005); Coclanis, "ReOrienting Atlantic History: The Global Dimensions of the 'Western' Rice Trade," in *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000*, ed. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman (Upper Saddle River, N.J., 2006), 111–27; Linda Colley, "The Sea Around Us," *New York Review of Books*, June 22, 2006, 43–45; Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 741–57; Ian K. Steele, "Bernard Bailyn's American Atlantic," *History and Theory* 45 (forthcoming). For a general survey of the Atlantic, see Paul Butel, *The Atlantic*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London, 1999).

[2] Bernard Bailyn, "The Idea of Atlantic History," *Itinerario* 20, no. 1 (1996): 19–44. Note my use of quotation marks around early modern in the text. This complicated concept is not readily, much less seamlessly, transferable beyond the West. Hence the quotations in the first instance. On this problem, see, for example, Jack A. Goldstone, "The Problem of the 'Early Modern' World," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 3 (August 1998): 249–84; Victor Lieberman, "Introduction: Eurasian Variants," in *Beyond Binary Histories: Re-Imagining Eurasia to c. 1830*, ed. Lieberman (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1999), 1–18. See also the essays included in the issue on "Early Modernities" in *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (Summer 1998).

née as an organizing conceit. The Black Sea has its people, as do the Great Lakes (both those in East Africa and those in my native region, the U.S. Midwest). Some scholars are studying the world of the North Sea, and there are Pacific basinites and rimmers galore. Others, their metageographies reshaped or at least modified by Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen's influential work, are even beginning to chant the mantra "oceans connect, oceans connect."[3] The problem with this and other repetitive sacred formulae, including Atlantic history, is that such repetition has what economists call opportunity costs, the costs incurred by not pursuing the best available alternative.

In a critique of Atlantic history or, more properly, of the Atlanticist perspective published in the *Journal of World History* in 2002, I made a four-part case against the approach, arguing that the perspective, "however enriching, is constricting interpretively and somewhat misspecified analytically, a halfway historiographical covenant as it were, nothing more, nothing less. By fixing our historical gaze so firmly toward the West, the approach may, anachronistically, give too much weight to the Atlantic Rim, separate Northwest Europe too sharply both from other parts of Europe and from Eurasia as a whole, accord too much primacy to America in explaining Europe's transoceanic trade patterns, and economically speaking, misrepresent through overstatement the place of Europe in the order of things."[4]

Where do I stand four years later? Hopefully, a bit better informed and, thus, my critique a bit more nuanced and sophisticated. But I must admit that scholarship in the intervening years has not persuaded me to move at all toward the Atlantic camp. Take my point about Atlanticists' fixation toward the West. Admittedly, I probably should use a different preposition here—on rather than toward—as important works such as Daniel K. Richter's *Facing East from Indian Country* clearly demonstrate. The obsession with the Atlantic world *qua* unit continues to impede our understanding of the degree to which this unit drew its lifeblood from

[3] Routledge, always leading the way, began a Seas in History series a few years back. The series includes Butel's volume on the Atlantic as well as volumes on the Baltic and North seas and the Indian Ocean. See David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and North Seas* (London, 2000); Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London, 2003). See also Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York, 2004). The celebrated Oceans Connect project was a Ford Foundation–funded program run by Martin W. Lewis and Kären E. Wigen at Duke University in the late 1990s. The core goal of this important project was to shift researchers' metageographies from discrete landmasses to interconnected ocean basins. See also Lewis and Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley, Calif., 1997); Wigen, "Introduction," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 2006): 717–21.

[4] Coclanis, *Journal of World History* 13: 176.

and hemorrhaged into others. Virtually everywhere one looks in the Atlantic world in the early modern period, one finds other worlds impinging on and often shaping developments. Here I am not talking about the origins of many European and African foodstuffs—this is not a game of "gotcha"—though even a cursory look at a work such as Andrew M. Watson's *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World* is enough to give pause to even the most ardent Occidentalists. In any case at this late date most of us are familiar with Marc Bloch's "idol of origins," a preoccupation with establishing the origins or first appearance of something. Nor am I calling for us to focus on the manner in which wind from the East affected Western social developments well before the early modern period: for that we can look to the famous scholarly doubleplay combination, Marshall G. S. Hodgson to Martin Bernal to John M. Hobson.[5] What I do ask is that we think about the close connections of East and West during the heyday of the Atlantic world. Once we do we find that during this particular period, *pace* Mr. Kipling, ever the twain shall meet.

Sometimes the connections are rendered visible in a manner analogous to that known in art as pentimento, where an earlier painting shows through another painting or at least parts thereof. For example, would the small peninsula at the westernmost tip of the Eurasian landmass have become Western Europe, as we came to know it in the early modern period, without the Black Death (which spread from Asia) and the collapse of the Mongol Empire? These factors were arguably necessary (though clearly insufficient) in shaping and perhaps even permitting the region's impressive fifteenth-century advance. And not to put too fine a point on it, but if we would explain Western Europe's rise beginning in that century, particularly its tentative external expansion, can we realistically do so without taking full account of the huge role of Islamic, Indian, and Chinese knowledge, particularly in the realms of science, mathematics, engineering, and technology? One could elaborate

[5] Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001). Clearly, in any full account of the issues at hand, concepts such as West and Europe need to be problematized as well. The meanings of such terms is hardly self-evident, as historians have repeatedly told us during the past few decades. On the influence of Islamic agriculture on other parts of the world, see Andrew M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700–1100* (Cambridge, 1983). On the "idol of origins," see Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (Manchester, Eng., 1954), 29–35. On the influence of Asia and Africa on the West, see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke III (New York, 1993); Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1987–91); John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Cambridge, 2004).

on discrete developments in each of these realms, but suffice it to say that we cannot understand the rise of Western Europe and, withal, the Atlantic world by severing these developments from developments in the rest of Europe, the rest of Eurasia, indeed, Afro-Eurasia. The Atlantic world was a world Europeans, Africans, and Americans "made together"—together with peoples from without.[6]

Then there are various questions relating to *mentalité*, personnel, and behavior. Can one readily, accurately, or legitimately draw hard-and-fast distinctions between voyages and voyagers to the West and voyages and voyagers to the East? Obviously, there are important distinctions to be made here, but said distinctions need greater interrogation and qualification than they are often given. This point is particularly true early in the early modern period when it seems anachronistic even to attempt to distinguish between discrete Atlantic and other non-Atlantic or extra-Atlantic explorers, particularly since most explorers, Atlantic or otherwise, were certainly searching for the East. As time passed distinctions became more clear-cut: no successful colonies of settlement were established in the East by Europeans in the early modern period. At the broadest level, however, economic gain was paramount among most voyagers, East and West, throughout the period in question and among those organized collectivities of Europeans (public, public-private, or private) that sponsored and financed them. Take the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, a group I have written about elsewhere. The eight men to whom Charles II granted the Carolina Charter in 1663 were nothing if not worldly, involved in financial ventures, adventures, and misadventures stretching from the Indian Ocean to West Africa to the West Indies to the Hudson Bay. Their investments included interests in Tangier, the Northwest Passage, and the Royal Africa Company, whatever and wherever profits seemed possible.[7]

Still, we do not know nearly enough to speak with much precision in a comparative sense about *mentalité*, personnel, or behavior among those who ventured east and those who set out for the West or even about the numbers involved. Though the number of Europeans who migrated to Asia in the early modern period was far greater than many

[6] The reference to pentimento is from Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative* (Lanham, Md., 2002), 7–8. The phrase "made together" is drawn from Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton, N.J., 1987).

[7] Coclanis, "ReOrienting Atlantic History." See also Peter A. Coclanis, "Global Perspectives on the Early Economic History of South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 106, nos. 2–3 (April–July 2005): 130–46.

realize—some estimates run as high as 375,000 for Dutch migrants alone in the seventeenth century (with another 100,000 from "Britain")—we are only now beginning to appreciate the importance of contextualizing Atlantic developments by linking them to European expansionary initiatives elsewhere in the world from 1500 to 1800. Moreover, according to quantitative data presented by Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, the value of English and Dutch imports from Asia in the middle of the eighteenth century, whatever the number of English and Dutch residents there, was greater than the value of English and Dutch imports from the Americas at that time.[8]

Similarly, it is easy to forget that, though developments in Western Europe, West Africa, the Americas, and Asia were dramatic in the early modern period, there was a lot going on, economically and otherwise, in other parts of Europe too. Intra-European trade, for example, was massive if not particularly exciting during the period, as the barge traffic on the Rhine and the traffic through the Danish Sound (among other indicators) amply attest. Protoindustrialization emerged in central Europe. The so-called second serfdom developed further east. Trade in *la méditérannée* still surged. And whereas roughly six thousand Scots ventured to the Americas in the seventeenth century, from thirty to fifty thousand Scots migrated to the Polish crown lands. Bailyn's "worlds in motion" indeed![9]

Even on blue water, it is well-nigh impossible to hive off the Atlantic unit from a larger world. This point is especially true when speaking of material matters, particularly biological and economic concerns. To the Black Death, we can add other disease scourges entering the West from the East. Indeed what we in the West refer to as the late medieval–early modern period can be broadly bracketed by two pandemics—bubonic plague (1347–50) and cholera (1832)—arriving from Asia.

[8] See Coclanis, *Journal of World History* 13: 176. Note that Bailyn goes with a lower estimate in *Atlantic History*, 134 n. 44. Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, "Commodity Price Integration, 1500–2000," in *Globalization in Historical Perspective*, ed. Michael D. Bordo, Alan M. Taylor, and Jeffrey G. Williamson, National Bureau of Economic Research Conference Report (Chicago, 2003), 13–62, esp. 19–21. The data employed by the authors were compiled by Niels Steensgaard and Om Prakash.

[9] Waldemar Kowalski, "The Placement of Urbanised Scots in the Polish Crown Lands during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Scottish Communities Abroad in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Alexia Grosjean and Steve Murdoch (Leiden, Netherlands, 2005), 53–103, esp. 63–64. On Bernard Bailyn's "worlds in motion," see Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York, 1986), 1–43.

Economic matters further sharpen the point. For example it defies logic to proceed under the assumption that the Atlantic world was a discrete economic unit when roughly 75 percent of one of its most important (and certainly celebrated) economic resources, American silver, ended up in China during the early modern period and when the Spanish real functioned as the international trading currency over much of Asia. Moreover the African slave trade ran largely on textiles—long cloths, Guinea cloths, allijars, salemporis, etc.—from India and cowrie shells from the Maldives. And speaking of Indian textiles, how does a dyed-in-the-wool Atlanticist explain the appeal of Indian calicoes that dominated the English textiles market as well as the appeal of Indian Guinea cloth in the West Indies and British North America in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries? Not to mention the equally dominant position in Europe during this same period of silk imports from the East. What about the fabled spice trade—pepper, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, mace—drugs and apothecary, ceramics, porcelain, coffee, tea, and, later, various other articles of chinoiserie?[10]

[10] K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1985), 18–19, 63–97, 182–202, 215–16; Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 139–49; Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Spanish Profitability in the Pacific: The Philippines in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Pacific Centuries: Pacific and Pacific Rim History since the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Flynn, Lionel Frost, and A. J. H. Latham, Routledge Explorations in Economic History (London, 1999), 23–37, esp. 23; Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*, 79–82, 96–101. Frank and John M. Hobson remind us that huge quantities of Japanese silver were also exported to China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Hobson, *Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*, 94, 149–50. On the role of Indian textiles and cowrie shells from the Maldives, see Prasannan Parthasarathi, "Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness in the Eighteenth Century: Britain and South India," *Past and Present*, no. 158 (February 1998): 79–109; Coclanis, "ReOrienting Atlantic History." On the role of cowrie shells in the slave trade, see Jan Hogendorn and Marion Johnson, *The Shell Money of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1986); Frank Perlin, "Money-Use in Late Precolonial South Asia and the World Trade in Currency Media," in *The Invisible City: Monetary, Administrative and Popular Infrastructures in Asia and Europe, 1500–1900* (Aldershot, Eng., 1993), 131–281, esp. 141–49. On the role of Asian products and goods more generally, see, for example, Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600–1800* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1976), esp. 230–63; Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (New York, 1984), 136–57; Ashin Das Gupta, "The Maritime Trade of Indonesia: 1500–1800," in *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800*, ed. Gupta and M. N. Pearson (Calcutta, India, 1987), 240–75; Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680*, 2 vols. (New Haven, Conn., 1988–93), esp. 2: 1–43. See also Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (Chicago, 1965–70), 1: bk. 1, 91–142, 2: bk. 1, 55. Finally, many of the articles repr. in the volumes of the series Expanding World: The European Impact on World History, 1450–1800, under the general editorship of A. J. R. Russell-Wood and published by Variorum/Ashgate, are relevant.

In addition to articles of trade, what about traders themselves? We all know about the famous European companies in Asia—the Portuguese East India Company, the English East India Company, and the Dutch East India Company (V.O.C.)—but do not forget the English Levant Company, the *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* (among other French companies), the Swedish East India Company, the Ostend Company, as well as a Danish company and others emanating from Prussia, Russia, and Spain. And do not forget that hundreds of Islamic Turks, Levantine Jews, and Armenians traded throughout Europe (and sometimes in West Africa) during the period in question, and thousands of indigenous middlemen—brokers, bankers, and the like (known in South Asia as banions, shroffs, dubashes, etc.)—worked closely with Europeans in Asia as well.[11] On the subject of trade, it should be noted that East and West shared many of the same commercial institutions and mechanisms, including commenda contracts, bills of exchange, debt instruments, trade associations, and spot markets, and worked out viable ways of doing business (or cross-cultural exchange) together.

Furthermore how can one consider the Atlantic world a discrete unit after 1571 in light of the Manila Galleon and its repercussions? Unless, that is to say, one is prepared to redefine China as an Atlantic power, a project that Gavin Menzies has been trying to promote, mercifully with little success to date. And if the Atlantic and the non-Atlantic worlds are so distinct, why did the treaties ending the nearly incessant warfare among European powers in the early modern period typically contain important provisions relating to Asia? Such provisions are evident in the diplomatic handiwork in Breda, Ryswick, Utrecht, Aix-la-Chapelle, Paris, and elsewhere. Invoking the Peace of Paris brings to mind another important matter: the *Indian* dimensions of the French and Indian War. I think it not merely plausible but reasonable to argue that in the long run the French surrender at Pondicherry in January 1761, effectively

[11] See, for example, Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, 136–206; Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, 63–118, 182–228; Frédéric Mauro, "Merchant Communities, 1350–1750," in *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long-Distance Trade in the Early Modern World, 1350–1750*, ed. James D. Tracy, Studies in Comparative Early Modern History (Cambridge, 1990), 255–86, esp. 266–78, 371–422; Vahé Baladouni, introduction to *Armenian Merchants of the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries: English East India Company Sources*, ed. Baladouni and Margaret Makepeace, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, 1998), xv–xxxv; Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin, eds., *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea* (New Delhi, India, 2000). For an excellent case study of a dubash, see K. S. Mathew, "Indian Entrepreneurs and Maritime Trade in the Bay of Bengal during the Eighteenth Century with Special Reference to Ananda Ranga Pillai," in *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500–1800*, ed. Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (New Delhi, India, 1999), 221–32.

removing the French as a presence in India, may have been one of the most significant results of that whole conflict. It certainly helped to facilitate the creation of the second British Empire, though there is little need for, much less value in, dividing that empire into phases one and two. In this regard the collapse of the V.O.C.'s trade monopoly on Java as a result of Asian military action during the American Revolution helped to usher in profound changes in Asian trade patterns, changes that were later reinforced by Thomas Raffles, who was Lord Minto's secretary when Minto seized the island in the name of Britain in 1811. After the seizure of Java, Raffles was named lieutenant-governor by Minto and took charge there from 1811 to 1816, when he put into place a number of liberal reforms. Incidentally, Lord Charles Cornwallis of Yorktown fame rebounded nicely in India where, as governor-general and commander in chief from 1786 to 1793, he earned an estimable reputation as a reform-minded administrator. After returning to England, he served as viceroy of Ireland and one of the negotiators of the Treaty of Amiens before being reappointed governor-general of India in 1805.[12]

[12] See Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 201–21; Flynn and Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 391–427; Peter A. Coclanis, "Pacific Overtures: The Spanish Lake and the Global Economy, 1500–1800," *Common-Place* 5, no. 2 (January 2005), http://www.common-place.org/vol-05/no-02/coclanis. On the broader picture, see Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques, (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles): Introduction méthodologique et indices d'activité* (Paris, France, 1960); John M. Headley, "Spain's Asian Presence, 1565–1590: Structures and Aspirations," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (November 1995): 623–46. On the purported Chinese discovery of America, see Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (New York, 2003). See also "China Beat Columbus to It, Perhaps," *The Economist*, Jan. 14, 2006, 80–81. On these treaties, see Coclanis, "ReOrienting Atlantic History." One can get some sense of the Asian dimensions of "European" treaties from the treaties themselves. Many of the treaties have been brought together as part of the Avalon Project at Yale Law School. See http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm. On these developments, see Anthony Reid, "A New Phase of Commercial Expansion in Southeast Asia, 1760–1850," in *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia and Korea, 1750–1900*, ed. Reid (New York, 1997), 57–81; Coclanis, *Journal of World History* 13: 179–80. On the surrender of Pondicherry by the French, see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York, 2000), 417–19. For the basic chronology of Raffles's life, see "Raffles, Thomas," in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee (Oxford, Eng., 1993), 16: 604–8. (By the way, Raffles was born on a ship off the coast of Jamaica, and I drafted this essay on Atlantic history while holding the Raffles Chair in Southeast Asian history at the National University of Singapore, which underscores my overarching point.) On Cornwallis's career, see "Cornwallis, Charles," ibid., 4: 1159–66. He died in India on Oct. 5 of that same year.

The so-called Atlantic world, then, should not be treated as a discrete unit between 1500 and 1800 CE. Northwestern European political entities were expanding outward during this period, creating global, not merely Atlantic, empires. At the same time, other Old World empires were expanding all across and around the Eurasian landmass, including Russia, the Ottomans, Safavid Iran, Mughal India, and China. In some areas these empires butted up against one another, which led to conflict. In other cases, however, these empires (or at least parties located therein) traded peacefully with one another, sometimes directly, sometimes through intermediaries. Indeed, stepping back a bit, one finds that the early modern period was one of those intermittent historical eras of relatively open trade across and around the Eurasian landmass. As Philip D. Curtin among others has pointed out, one such period occurred "in the Han-Parthian-Roman period in the early Christian era." Another occurred during what might be called the Tang-Abbassid period during the seventh and eighth centuries of the common era. Yet another existed during the height of Mongol power between about 1250 and 1350 CE—the period of Janet L. Abu-Lughod's first "world system"—and again as Europe expanded outward by sea to link up with what K. N. Chaudhuri referred to as the "emporia" trade of Asia after 1500.[13]

The final point in my aforementioned 2002 critique of Atlantic history *qua* field related to the tendency by proponents to overestimate the centrality of Europe during the period 1500–1800 CE. I invoked the work of a variety of scholars, most notably those associated with the California School, to make the case that Asia was economically far more dynamic, wealthy, and vibrant during the early modern period than many writers had previously believed, with its most advanced regions—the lower Yangzi delta, most notably—by many standards on par with if not ahead of the most advanced regions in northwestern Europe. Though the California School scholars cannot yet claim total victory here—indeed, I myself do not completely accept parts of their argument, particularly that part purporting to explain the reasons for Asia's relative fall and Europe's relative rise circa 1750–1800—even the

[13] Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, 90–108, esp. 105; Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, 34–62, esp. 98–118 ("emporia"); Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York, 1989); Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea* (Delhi, India, 1993), 76–136; S. A. M. Adshead, *T'ang China: The Rise of the East in World History* (Basingstoke, Eng., 2004), 68–100; Milo Kearney, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (New York, 2004), 31–102.

crustiest Eurocentrics assessing the state of the debate in 2006 would concede that Kenneth Pomeranz et al. have demonstrated conclusively that if differentials in wealth and living standards existed between Asia and Europe in the early modern period they were probably trivial.[14]

In contact and sometimes competition with these Eurasian empires, northwestern Europe expanded externally in what can be seen as a period of relatively open trade despite all the lip service given to mercantilism. If we place Europe's early modern period in a broader chronological and spatial framework, the conceptual schema Abu-Lughod lays out in *Before European Hegemony* with reference to the Mongol period is suggestive for later periods as well. According to Abu-Lughod the (loosely integrated) thirteenth-century world system was comprised of eight interacting and partially overlapping trade circuits encompassing much of Europe, the Middle East, north and northeast Africa, and Asia. In some ways her circuits resemble Venn diagrams, depicting a series of historical (trade) sets, which have some, but not all, elements in common. The common areas might be considered (trade) intersections, but the entire series can be spanned without any breaks. Abu-Lughod argues that this system, for a variety of reasons, gradually breaks down after about 1350. Others argue that the breakdown she sees may be overstated, but it may repay our time to think

[14] Scholars associated with the California School include, among others, Kenneth Pomeranz, R. Bin Wong, James Z. Lee, and Robert B. Marks, as well as honorary alumni such as Andre Gunder Frank and James M. Blaut. For a sampling of their works, see Marks, *Origins of the Modern World*; Frank, *ReOrient*; Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York, 1993); Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1997); Lee and Wang Feng, *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities, 1700–2000* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999); Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, N.J., 2000); Blaut, *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (New York, 2000). See also Giovanni Arrighi, Takeshi Hamashita, and Mark Seldon, eds., *The Resurgence of East Asia: 500, 150 and 50 Year Perspectives* (London, 2003). The essays therein by Kaoru Sugihara, Gary G. Hamilton, Wei-An Chang, and Pomeranz (not surprisingly) support the positions staked out by those of the California School. On the California School, see Coclanis, *Journal of World History* 13: 180–81. For a very insightful and respectful critique by a Europeanist, see P. H. H. Vries, "Are Coal and Colonies Really Crucial? Kenneth Pomeranz and the Great Divergence," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 407–46, esp. 410–12. For another excellent (generally very sympathetic) critique of Pomeranz's work, see Prasannan Parthasarathi, "Review Article: The Great Divergence," *Past and Present*, no. 176 (August 2002): 275–93. See also Ricardo Duchesne, "Asia First?" *Journal of the Historical Society* 6, no. 1 (March 2006): 69–91.

about how a similar but much more extensive system of circuits was reconstituted in the period 1450–1800 CE or thereabouts.[15]

This system, though not yet quite global, was for the first time approaching true world-system status by the end of this period. By 1800 the entire world had pretty much been incorporated into the mental maps, the metageographies, as it were, of navigators and intellectuals alike, and trade orbits were becoming increasingly far-flung. In the middle of this period, say 1650 or 1700, one finds modifications of and extensions to the medieval circuits found by Abu-Lughod several hundred years earlier, but much of her system is still recognizable. The most notable change is a new circuit encompassing the Atlantic world we know and love, with a transpacific extension in Manila linking American silver to China and thereby to Chinese goods. Another major change was what might be called the Vasco da Gama circuit connecting Western Europe and West Africa to extended Indian Ocean emporia (all the way to Japan and Formosa) via the Cape of Good Hope. Though Asianists, particularly those associated with the California School, reject the notion that this circuit revolutionized Asian trade—along with K. M. Panikkar's implicitly Eurocentric notion of a "Vasco Da Gama Epoch"—it was nonetheless important in creating new links and relationships.[16]

There are other smaller changes in the reconstitution of the system Abu-Lughod describes for the earlier period. The Mediterranean circuit extends farther west and south. The North Sea world has emerged as a circuit. The Eurasian overland circuit is qualitatively different and now facilitated largely by Armenian traders. The Arabian Sea/Northeast Africa/Red Sea circuits incorporate more of East Africa. The Asian circuits are larger, and several new circuits have emerged in Africa: the trans-Saharan circuit and a variety of smaller circuits linking coastal areas in Africa with the interior. It is important to recognize that sub-Saharan Africa had by this time three coasts: the Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the Sahara itself, with traders and trade centers

[15] Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 3–40. For a visual representation of the eight circuits, see 34, fig. 1. On the persistence of parts of her world system, see Frank, *ReOrient*, 128–30.

[16] David Armitage, "Is There a Pre-History of Globalization?" in *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective*, ed. Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor (New York, 2004), 165–76, esp. 169–70. For Panikkar's position, see K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance; A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498–1945* (London, 1953).

operating on the coastlines of all three. And, finally, a continental circuit or two may have encompassed broad parts of the Americas.[17]

The upshot of all this circuitry was a historically rapid increase in world trade during the early modern period. As Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson argue, world trade grew significantly faster than did world population in this period, testimony to the relative openness, in a functional sense at least, of the system. This series of trade sets was not a full-blown, reified world system in a Wallersteinian sense.[18] Yet it is possible to distinguish certain broadly patterned trade routes and trade relationships between 1500 and 1800 CE and, if one is so inclined (and I am), one can legitimately refer to them as circuits or orbits that were related to one another, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees.

To say that I am not calling for a Wallersteinian form of world-systems analysis is not meant to disparage either Wallerstein or the many scholars in the historical social sciences, particularly historical sociology, who still operate within this framework. The Wallersteinian framework is not completely unhelpful as a heuristic, but a more powerful framework can be drawn from the Marxist and neo-Marxist literature on the articulation of productive modes. This literature can be rather abstruse at times but, employed cautiously and metaphorically, it can help us to understand and interpret the relationship in the early modern period between the Atlantic and the world.

To Marxists a mode of production refers to the relationship between the producers of some economic output, on the one hand, and

[17] Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, 26–28. On the contours of the trans-Saharan trade, which, interestingly enough, was greater in value in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than it had been in the pre-European era, see Ralph A. Austen, "Marginalization, Stagnation, and Growth: The Trans-Saharan Caravan Trade in the Era of European Expansion, 1500–1900," in Tracy, *Rise of Merchant Empires*, 311–50. The likelihood of such continental circuits seems apparent in light of the work of Alan Taylor and others. For an introduction to the continental approach, see Taylor, *American Colonies,* Peguin History of the United States (New York, 2001), and the essays by Andrés Reséndez, Elizabeth A. Fenn, James F. Brooks, and Taylor in the section "Continental Possessions" in *Journal of the Early Republic* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 159–88.

[18] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, 3 vols. (New York, 1974–89); Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "After Columbus: Explaining Europe's Overseas Trade Boom, 1500–1800," *Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 2 (June 2002): 417–56, esp. table 1, 419–21; Findlay and O'Rourke, "Commodity Price Integration." For a similar approach to Wallerstein's, see Andre Gunder Frank, *World Accumulation, 1492–1789* (New York, 1978). Note that the journal *Review*—associated with the Fernand Braudel Center at the State University of New York at Binghamton—has long been a leading venue for world-systems analysis.

the owners of the means of production, on the other. In classical Marxism modes of production follow one another in successive stages from various precapitalist modes—primitive communalism, slavery, feudalism—to capitalism and, in time (and with a leap of faith), to socialism. The European founders of Marxism generally wrote as though world history would unfold more or less as it did in Europe, with areas everywhere proceeding in time through the various productive modes in the same linear sequence, indeed, in the same linear manner, as had Europe. To be sure Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Rudolf Hilferding, Nikolay Bukharin, Vladimir Lenin, and other classical Marxists were sensitive to complexities arising from perceived transitions between discrete modes, but the basic sequence of the scheme previously outlined was not seriously questioned.[19]

During the past two generations, however, many neo-Marxists, particularly those focusing on what used to be called the third world, found this basic scheme unsatisfactory. They found that the theoretical options available to them in categorizing the economies of developing countries that were in close contact with fully capitalist economies—those options being precapitalist, transitional, or fully capitalist—did not adequately explain the facts on the ground. More specifically, these writers believed that different production modes often existed simultaneously, without necessarily being part of any linear transition to capitalism and without necessarily being in contradiction. Rather such modes interacted or articulated with one another in different ways and with varying consequences. In most cases, though, these writers saw a precapitalist form, whether slavery or some type of indigenous tributary mode or kin-based mode, being harnessed in such a way as to subsidize, underpin, and support capitalist actors and sectors in the exploitation and expropriation process in the third world. This complex process, seen as unequal and asymmetrical, became widely known in the literature as the articulation of production modes.[20]

[19] On classical Marxism—works by Marxists writing around the time of the Second International (1889–1914)—see, for example, David Renton, *Classical Marxism: Socialist Theory and the Second International* (Cheltenham, Eng., 2002). On the individuals mentioned in the text, see, for example, Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, 2d ed. (London, 1990), 25–72, 88–135; Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1991).

[20] See, for example, Pierre-Philippe Rey, *Colonialisme, néo-colonialisme et transition au capitalisme: Exemple de la "Comilog" au Congo-Brazzaville* (Paris, France, 1971); Giovanni Arrighi and John S. Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (New York, 1973); Rey, *Les alliances de classes* (Paris, France, 1973); Arrighi, *The Geometry of Imperialism: The Limits of Hobson's Paradigm*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London, 1978); Colin Leys, "Capital Accumulation, Class Formation and

So how does this literature help us in understanding the Atlantic/world? The key lies in the concept of articulation, since in the early modern period the unitary Atlantic world of Bernard Bailyn et al. clearly articulated with other circuits and orbits around the globe. And this articulation process (what might be called the spatial articulation of trade circuits or, speaking more broadly, exchange circuits) manifested itself in different ways and with varying consequences, all of which are worthy of future study. In this scheme the Indian Ocean trade, the Manila Galleon, the Silk Road—not to mention the exchange circuits of the Mediterranean, Africa, central and eastern Europe, and the North Sea—are all conjoined in appropriate ways to goings-on in and along the Atlantic basin. If we adopted this approach, we would need, among other things, to modify David Armitage's useful trichotomy by adding to the concepts circumatlantic, transatlantic, and cisatlantic history the concept of something that, *faute de mieux*, might be called "conjuncto-atlantic" history.[21]

In so doing we could link up with other questions and other historiographies to offer a broader, richer, amplified view of Atlantic dynamics. What, for example, were the differential effects of the spatial articulation of trade circuits on the various actors and entities involved therein? Did such effects change over time? If so, how? Were the dominant areas in the Atlantic world, particularly those in northwest Europe, supported and subsidized by the process of articulation, as might be presumed, or were matters more complicated? Or perhaps, in some cases such as East Asia (or at least the lower Yangzi), even reversed? (Obviously, answering such questions goes beyond the scope of this preliminary exercise.) In any case we still lack the empirical evidence regarding some of these circuits to speak with much confidence about the articulation process(es) in which they were involved. Nonetheless I am convinced that at least some Atlanticists would do well to test, if not to embrace, this approach. For whatever the answers to these questions, they would be based on the

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Dependency—The Significance of the Kenyan Case," in *The Socialist Register, 1978*, ed. Ralph Miliband and John Saville (New York, 1978), 241–66. For a reformulation of Colin Leys's position, see Leys, "African Capitalists and Development: Theoretical Questions," in *African Capitalists in African Development*, ed. Bruce J. Berman and Leys (Boulder, Colo., 1994), 11–38. For a good introduction to this literature, see Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, 225–59. Christopher Morris has thoughtfully employed some of the "articulation of production modes" literature (albeit in another context) in Morris, "The Articulation of Two Worlds: The Master-Slave Relationship Reconsidered," *Journal of American History* 85, no. 3 (December 1998): 982–1007 (quotation, 984).

[21] David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in Armitage and Braddick, *British Atlantic World*, 11–27.

linkage of processes occurring in the Atlantic with those of the Atlantic (even if extra-Atlantic in a strict geographic sense). In other words the Moluccas, Manila, Canton, Malacca, Calicut, Surat, the Maldives, Kashgar, Samarkand, Mocha, and Cairo, as well as Venice, Danzig, and Cologne, were all implicated in the making of Atlantic history rather than worlds apart.

Almost all my attention thus far has been on material, particularly economic, matters. The interrelated circuits mentioned previously refer to trade, but such circuits are to a greater or lesser degree applicable to other types of exchanges: biological, technological, and scientific exchanges, most obviously, but extending to the philosophical-religious realms as well. Some exciting work in economic theory sheds light on how broad ideational exchanges arising from the spatial articulation of trade circuits during the early modern period might have played a significant role in facilitating sustained economic growth in the Atlantic world and elsewhere. This work is just one example of the potential explanatory power of a more expansive and more relational approach to analyzing the Atlantic world.

Whereas I have drawn in the previous section from several critical traditions in economics, at the end of the day (or at least of this article) I return, by no means begrudgingly, to the standard bourgeois economic mold. In so doing we find that during the past twenty years or so economic growth theory has been transformed. Without getting into the intricacies of the transformation, I shall call attention to some important work that is relevant to our discussion of articulating trade circuits, including circuits linked with the Atlantic world.

In a hugely influential 1991 article, Luis A. Rivera-Batiz and Paul M. Romer developed an endogenous model of technological change that focused on economic integration as the key. Most earlier work had assumed and even acknowledged the importance of technological change in the growth process but had never explained, much less modeled, how such change came about. According to Rivera-Batiz and Romer (particularly the latter, who is today most closely associated with the breakthrough), developments that break down economic isolation and facilitate economic integration are particularly important in explaining technological change. Their argument is not based primarily on the Ricardian or neo-Ricardian position that integration brings into play efficiency-enhancing factors relating to comparative advantage. Rather they emphasize that with integration, particularly the integration of diverse areas and peoples from advanced societies, comes not merely new goods but, more important, new ideas. And the trade-induced flow of

new ideas—which, according to Rivera-Batiz and Romer, is heavily influenced by institutions and public policy—is crucial to the cross-border (or even cross-civilizational) diffusion of new technology and thus often to technological progress and the endogenization and institutionalization of economic growth. Though Rivera-Batiz and Romer are laying out a general framework, it is important and for our purposes most revealing to note that in their article they cite the exchange of ideas via the Silk Road as an example par excellence of the trade-induced concatenation of cross-cultural knowledge bases that lies at the axiomatic heart of their theory of integration and endogenous growth—an effect of the spatial articulation of trade circuits, in other words.[22]

I have attempted to open up the concept of Atlantic history a bit. The approach associated with the concept is arguably the most exciting development to have coursed through early American history circles in the last generation. It has helped to link up or at least to begin an ongoing conversation among scholars working in hitherto largely independent fields, and it has enriched our understanding of the complex, intricately imbricated relationship among various parts of Western Europe, West Africa, and the Americas during the early modern period. In so doing scholars employing the approach, including some of the finest scholars in the Atlantic world, have, however unintentionally, sucked up a lot of scholarly air and seized a lot of scholarly space. This development has led to the relative neglect of other important approaches, such as the hemispheric approach that Jack P. Greene among others has been calling for, and, even more seriously from my perspective, it has had the perverse effect of separating if not isolating

[22] Luis A. Rivera-Batiz and Paul M. Romer, "Economic Integration and Endogenous Growth," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 106, no. 2 (May 1991): 531–55, esp. 546–47; Rivera-Batiz and Romer, "International Trade with Endogenous Technological Change," *European Economic Review* 35, no. 4 (May 1991): 971–1004; Romer, "The Origins of Endogenous Growth," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 3–22; Rivera-Batiz and Romer, "Economic Integration and Endogenous Growth: An Addendum," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 109, no. 1 (February 1994): 307–8. For an excellent empirically based discussion of the role of the Silk Road in promoting endogenous economic growth, see Debin Ma, "The Great Silk Exchange: How the World Was Connected and Developed," in Flynn, Frost, and Latham, *Pacific Centuries*, 38–69. On broader intellectual exchange across Eurasia during the period 1500–1800, see Geoffrey C. Gunn, *First Globalization: The Eurasian Exchange, 1500–1800* (Lanham, Md., 2003). On the economic theory itself, see, for example, Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt, *Endogenous Growth Theory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998). On the intellectual history of the theory of endogenous technological change, see David Warsh, *Knowledge and the Wealth of Nations: A Story of Economic Discovery* (New York, 2006).

the Atlantic unit from all other units in the early modern period. The global links and connections to which I have called attention here should be seen as an earnest attempt to convince Atlanticists to move "a little beyond," as the transcendentalists might put it, and to broaden their canvas, thereby justifying the use of a slash between the words "Atlantic" and "world."[23]

[23] Jack P. Greene, "Comparing Early Modern American Worlds: Some Reflections on the Promise of a Hemispheric Perspective," *History Compass* 1, no. 1 (January–December 2003), doi: 10.1111/1478-0542.026, http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1478-0542.026. See also Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Some Caveats about the 'Atlantic' Paradigm," *History Compass* 1, no. 1 (January–December 2003), doi: 10.1111/1478-0542.004, http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/ doi/abs/10.1111/1478-0542.004. The phrase in the last sentence of the text is from Charles Capper, "A Little Beyond: The Problem of the Transcendentalist Movement in American History," *Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (September 1998): 502–39 (quotation, 503). The words "a little beyond" belong to a fellow traveler of the transcendentalists, Almira Baslow, who formulated a quick-and-dirty definition of the movement in 1836.